

VZCZCXYZ0004  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0826/01 3332229  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 292229Z NOV 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1088  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 7288  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 8468  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV 8383  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 4516  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 9521  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE 0351  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 9788  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0987  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE 5174  
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE 4257  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE 2210  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE 0128  
RUEHBO/USMILGP BOGOTA CO IMMEDIATE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1402  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010826

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2016

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#) [CS](#) [CU](#) [FR](#) [NO](#) [SP](#) [SZ](#)

SUBJECT: GOC PEACE COMMISSIONER ON PARAMILITARY LINKS TO  
GOC OFFICIALS, ELN AND THE FARC

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo said the GOC is committed to uncovering the truth about paramilitary links to Colombia's political, economic, and military elites, but warned that the process would produce substantial political and institutional costs. He is urging President Uribe to reach out to opposition political parties in an effort to agree on a unified approach to manage the institutional damage resulting from the revelations. He does not expect any breakthroughs at the next round of ELN talks, but hopes to make progress on substantive issues. Restrepo said the GOC has authorized the accompanying countries to convey to the FARC that the GOC will not agree to talks on a humanitarian accord unless the FARC halts terrorist actions, makes a good faith gesture such as providing proof of life, and puts forth a viable proposal. End Summary

#### Revelations of Colombian Congress-Paramilitary Ties

¶2. (C) Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo told us November 22 the GOC supports the ongoing judicial investigations of links between Colombian Congressmen and paramilitary leaders. The peace process aimed to produce the truth about paramilitary crimes\*including their links to regional political, economic and military elites\*and the revelations will continue. This is key to helping Colombia break with its past. Still, he said the GOC is paying a high political cost, since many of the congressmen involved are members of President Uribe's coalition. The GOC's failure to capture paramilitary leader Vicente Castano and other paramilitary fugitives, its inability to prevent the emergence of new criminal groups, and the Fiscalía's slow implementation of the Justice and Peace Law are exacerbating this problem.

¶3. (C) Restrepo said the danger is that opposition political parties will continue to exploit the exposure of paramilitary-political class links for purely partisan advantage. This will not only damage President Uribe and his government, but will also severely undermine the credibility

and effectiveness of Colombia's public institutions. Restrepo said he is urging President Uribe to try to agree with the opposition Liberal and Polo Democratico parties on a unified approach to manage the institutional damage resulting from the investigations. He recognized that such a deal would require the GOC to offer the opposition concrete advantages, including government positions and a commitment to pursue the investigations wherever they might lead. Restrepo said such an agreement would be difficult to achieve, especially given the personal bitterness between many political leaders, but said it would be worth it to structure the public political debate.

#### Paramilitary Leaders in La Ceja and New Criminal Groups

14. (C) Restrepo said the paramilitary leaders in La Ceja "feel trapped" and cannot agree on a common strategy. Leaders such as Jorge 40 and Macaco are losing control over their organizations, and fear the newly emerging criminal groups. Omega, Jorge 40's main military leader, was killed on November 18 in Medellin by narcotraffickers intent on seizing 40's territory. Restrepo said La Ceja group is looking to Vicente Castano for leadership. The November 6 letter by Castano accusing the GOC of violating its deal with the paramilitaries was drafted in consultation with the La Ceja detainees, and the group is increasingly unwilling to cooperate with the JPL process. Restrepo doubted that more than 50 paramilitaries would eventually ratify their willingness to confess under the Justice and Peace Law (JPL). He said the GOC would subject those who do not ratify to the ordinary justice system, including extradition, but warned this would involve security, political and legal risks.

15. (C) Restrepo said Vicente Castano offered to meet with him November 21 under specific conditions, but he had refused. Restrepo said the GOC is searching for Castano, but it would be difficult to locate and detain him. The paramilitary leader has deep pockets, operates his businesses through multiple intermediaries, and is prepared to spend years on the run. Restrepo said the GOC faces similar difficulties in combating new criminal groups. Narcotraffickers\*including the FARC\*are linking up with former paramilitary mid-level commanders to build their own military capacity. The rural police, or carabineros, have captured 460 members of these groups, but have been unable to destroy a single organization or to arrest their growth. Restrepo claimed current counternarcotics efforts are ineffective, making it difficult for the GOC to halt the formation of new, narco-based, paramilitary groups.

#### ELN

16. (C) Restrepo does not expect the next round of talks in Havana in December to produce any breakthroughs, but hopes to make some progress on substantive issues. The GOC will try to use the ELN's desire for international funding to press for ELN commitments on a ceasefire and a halt to kidnapping. It is unacceptable for the ELN to continue kidnapping, which it does at the rate of a victim a week, while talks continue. He would meet with ELN negotiators Antonio Garcia, Francisco Galan, and Juan Cuellar, as well as the accompanying countries, in Caracas on November 23 to lay the groundwork for the Havana meeting. Restrepo reiterated his fear that the ELN is not serious about an agreement, and is only using the talks to strengthen its ties with civil society and the international community. He conceded, however, that the GOC is not prepared to break off talks at this point.

17. (C) Restrepo complained the GOC receives little help from other participants in the negotiations. The accompanying countries\*Spain, Norway and Switzerland\*routinely yield to the ELN or adopt a neutral stance. For example, the ELN claims it has a commitment from Norway to provide it with 500,000 Euros with no strings attached. The soft approach of the accompanying countries toward the ELN complicates his efforts to use international funding as leverage in the negotiations. He said the guarantors are "unreliable" and

have no influence over the ELN. Lastly, Restrepo noted that the civil society participants are all ELN sympathizers or GOC critics.

FARC

18. (C) Restrepo said he met with representative of the three accompanying countries\*Spain, France and Switzerland\*in Paris in early November to explain the GOC's decision to break off overtures to the FARC after the group's October 19 bombing in Bogota. He also outlined the GOC's position that no talks on a humanitarian accord could occur until the FARC suspended terrorist actions, made a good faith gesture such as providing proof of life, and put forth a viable proposal for discussion. Restrepo said the French were initially critical of the GOC position, but later voiced understanding. He said the GOC approved a request by the countries to reach out to the FARC to convey the GOC stance. Restrepo added that President Uribe had also authorized political operator Alvaro Leyva to do the same.

19. (C) Despite these contacts, Restrepo doubted the FARC would respond favorably. The FARC continues to believe it can outlast President Uribe. With each Colombian legislator tied to the paramilitaries, the FARC feel politically stronger vis--vis the GOC. The recent mistrial in the Simon Trinidad case further inflated the FARC's sense of its political power. Moreover, FARC success in infiltrating territory vacated by the paramilitaries has strengthened its military position on the ground and made the group even more intransigent.

110. (C) Restrepo said the GOC has "great hopes" that increased use of high technology weapons\*coupled with improved intelligence\*will enable it to kill or capture a FARC secretariat member, thereby forcing the FARC to begin serious negotiations. He said a GOC success against a Secretariat member would be a serious blow to the group's

SIPDIS  
mystique and image of invincibility. Still, Restrepo said such an action alone would be unlikely to bring the FARC to the negotiating table.  
WOOD

=====CABLE ENDS=====